

## Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 IO-11 /061 W

----- 116783

R 171058Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5291

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BUDAPEST 0508

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, HU, VT

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL APPROVES ARCHBISHOP APPOINTMENT

REF: BUDAPEST 0326, 75 ROME 16666, FBIS 121551Z FEB 76

1. PRESS ANNOUNCED FEB 13 THAT DR. LASZLO LEKAI WAS APPOINTED ARCHBISHOP OF ESZTERGOM BY POPE PAUL VI, AND THAT HUNGARIAN PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL HAS GRANTED ITS "PRELIMINARY CONSENT". ARCHBISHOP LEKAI HAS BEEN SERVING AS APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF ESZTERGOM FOR PAST TWO YEARS. AT SAME TIME DR. JOZSEF IJJAS, ARCHBISHOP OF KALOCSA AND PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL OF BISHOPS, WAS NAMED AS ASSISTANT TO PONTIFICAL THRONE.

2. CATHOLIC PRIEST TOLD EMBASSY PAO IN JUNE 1975 THAT BOTH VATICAN AND GOH CONSIDRED BISHOP LEKAI AS FIRST CHOICE TO BE ARCHBISHOP, BUT THAT THERE WAS SOME DIFFICULTY BECAUSE OF NUMBER OF MORE SENIOR BISHOPS WHO WOULD HAVE TO BE PASSED OVER. WE PRESUME THAT JAN 19-24 VISIT OF ARCH-BISHOP LUIGI POGGI TO BUDAPEST WAS CONCERNED WITH FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR BISHOP LEKAI'S APPOINTMENT.

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3. ARCHBISHOP LEKAI NOW OCCUPIES ESZTERGOM SEE, POST

HISTORICALLY HELD BY CARDINAL AND PRIMATE OF CHURCH  
IN HUNGARY. IT IS EXPECTED HERE THAT IN DUE COURSE  
HE WILL BE ELEVATED TO CARDINAL AND THAT HE WILL  
REPLACE IJJAS AS PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL OF BISHOPS.  
LEKAI IS WELL RESPECTED IN CHURCH CIRCLES AND IT IS  
NOTEWORTHY THAT HE WAS ACCEPTABLE TO GOH EVEN THOUGH  
HE HAS STAYED ALOOF FROM "PEACE PRIESTS". HIS  
APPOINTMENT DEMONSTRATES SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN  
VATICAN-GOH RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH STEP WOULD NOT HAVE  
BEEN POSSIBLE WHILE CARDINAL MINDSZENTY WAS ALIVE,  
NAMING OF LEKAI INDICATES THAT GOH WISHES TO UPGRADE  
ITS RELATIONS WITH VATICAN. MOREOVER, IN RECENT  
MONTHS HUNGARIAN MEDIA HAVE BEEN BUSILY WORKING TO  
DEMONSTRATE GOH'S GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL RELIGIOUS  
GROUPS IN HUNGARY AND ITS BENIGN ATTITUDE TOWARD  
"BELIEVERS".

4. IJJAS IS OLD AND SICK AND IS NOT WELL REGARDED  
BY VATICAN BECAUSE OF HIS COLLABORATION WITH "PEACE  
"PRIESTS". HIS NEW APPOINTMENT EFFECTIVELY PUTS HIM  
ON THE SHELF AND APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PART OF PACKAGE  
DEAL BETWEEN VATICAN AND GOH.  
MCAULIFFE

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